

Plurals of plural pronouns in Turkish

Turkish allows plural pronouns to bear additional plural morphology, e.g. *biz-ler* (lit. 1.PL-PL), *siz-ler* (lit. 2.PL-PL). We argue that such apparent pluralized plural pronouns are *pronoun-noun constructions* (PNCs), as in *biz kadın-lar* ‘we women,’ headed by a null noun with a contextually supplied interpretation. We develop a unified kind-based analysis of pluralized plural pronouns and PNCs, on which person features compose with a noun to denote a kind, the property correlate of which the individual encoded in the person feature is presupposed to possess. In addition to a novel analysis of pluralized plural pronouns, our approach contributes to the analysis of PNCs.

Puzzle. Pluralized plural pronouns, like PNCs, occur in contexts that invoke a salient social group, typically in generic contexts or in statements highlighting a shared identity (1) (Göksel & Kerslake 2005; cf. Ketrez 2007; Paparounas & Akkuş 2024). The plain pronouns (*biz*, *siz*) are also felicitous in these contexts, but the pluralized forms emphasize a stronger sense of collective identity.

- (1) a. *Siz-ler/ Siz genç-ler* bu ülke-nin geleceği-siniz.
 you-PL you young-PL this country-GEN future-2PL
 ‘You young people are the future of this country.’
- b. *Biz-ler/ Biz kadın-lar* hak-lar-ımız-a her zaman sahip çık-acağ-ız.
 we-PL we woman-PL rightPL-1PLPOSS-DAT every time stand.up-FUT-1PL
 ‘We women will stand up for our rights all the time.’

In episodic contexts where the referents do not constitute a salient social group or identity, pluralized plural pronouns become infelicitous or at best awkward, unlike the plain pronoun:

- (2) a. Ali: Kim geldi? ‘Who came?’
 Cem: *Biz(#-ler)* gel-di-k.
 we-PL come.PST-1PL
 ‘We came.’
- b. Ali (later to the others in the house):
Siz(#-ler) bulaşık-lar-ı yıkarken, Cem, Sevgi ve Melek gel-di.
 you-PL dish-PL-ACC while.washing Cem Sevgi and Melek come-PST
 ‘While you were washing the dishes, Cem, Sevgi, and Melek came.’

The puzzle is why plural morphology on already plural pronouns is licensed in generic collective reference but becomes infelicitous in ordinary episodic contexts.

Core Analysis. We analyze pluralized plural pronouns as underlyingly identical to PNCs. Building on Alexiadou et al. (2024), we propose that these constructions are plural kind-denoting expressions derived via a variant of the kind-forming operator $\hat{\cap}$, adapted from Chierchia (1998), that carries person features. Specifically, we propose that PNCs are DPs involving an NP denoting a sum-closed property, with the person features ($\pi_{1/2}$) introduced in [Spec, DP] as the presuppositional content of the $\hat{\cap}$ operator (see also Jenks & Konate 2022, cf. Paparounas & Akkuş 2024). This variant of $\hat{\cap}$ is a function that takes a predicate and an individual and returns a kind, where kinds are functions from a world to the maximal individual satisfying the predicate in that world. This parallels the distinction between plain and indexed definite determiners proposed by Schwarz (2009) (see also Elbourne 2008, Jenks 2018, *et seq.*), but with the output of the function being a kind rather than an ordinary individual. $\hat{\cap}$ is a partial function that returns a defined value only if the relevant conversational participant in the context satisfies the predicate argument of the operator.

- (3) $[\hat{\cap}]^{c,g} = \lambda P.\lambda y.\lambda w. \iota x. P_w(x)$, defined iff $P_w(y)$

Number features are introduced above DP, as in Sauerland (2003). PL (spelled out by *-lar*) denotes an identity function on individuals, whether kind or object-level (cf. SG, which has an atomicity presupposition) (see Sağ 2025 for Turkish; cf. Scontras 2022). The structure for pluralized pronouns and PNCs is given in (4), and the semantics for *biz kadın-lar* ‘we women’ in (5):

(4) [#P [DP π_1 [D \cap [NP *woman]] [# PL -lar]]

(5) $\llbracket (5a) \rrbracket^{c,g} = \lambda w. \iota x. *woman_w(x)$, defined iff $*woman_w(\text{speaker}(c))$

In pluralized pronouns, the NP is a null noun whose interpretation (i.e. a sum-closed P) is supplied by context. For example, *bizler* in (2) is the null-NP counterpart of *biz kadınlar*. First and second-person features are spelled out as *biz* and *siz*, respectively, in the context of a D head introducing the kind-forming operator. This is compatible with approaches that treat first and second-person plural pronouns as denoting plural individuals that include the speaker/addressee (Cooper 1983; Schlenker 2003; Jenks & Konate 2022; Alexiadou et al. 2024, a.o.). In the absence of an overt NP, the plural number feature is realized as an affix *-ler* on *biz* and *siz*.

Analyzing pluralized pronouns as kind terms aligns with their use in generic or collective identity statements. In Chierchia’s (1998) system, generic predication involves instantiation of the kind via the \cup operator, which maps a kind to the set of entities instantiating it in a given world (\cup : $\lambda k. \lambda x. x \leq k_w$). In rhetorical discourse, the speaker invokes a socially salient kind whose instances include the conversational participants to emphasize belongingness. By contrast, plain plural pronouns *biz* and *siz* are ordinary DPs whose D head encodes person features and directly refers to pluralities including the speaker or addressee, serving as the default plural pronoun forms.

(6) $\llbracket biz \rrbracket^{c,g} = g(x)$, defined iff $\text{speaker}(c) \leq g(x)$

On plain vs. pluralized pronouns. Since instantiation is available for pluralized pronouns, we might expect them to be felicitous in episodic contexts like (2) if their referents belong to a shared kind (e.g. if Cem, Sevgi, and Melek are all children, students, etc.). After all, bare plural NPs in Turkish can be made definite via the covert IOTA operator, while also allowing kind level interpretations (Sağ 2022). To rule out such uses of pluralized pronouns, we appeal to Schlenker’s (2019) *Minimize Restrictors!* (MR!) constraint, which bans an expression of the form *the A B* whenever *the B* is grammatical and has the same denotation as *the A B*, unless *A* serves a pragmatic function. For instance, MR! accounts for the oddness of the adjective in *John’s (#blond) father has arrived*. In line with this, pluralized plural pronouns are disfavored in immediate situation contexts like (2) since they have an additional property restrictor, while the plain pronoun denotes the same individual without this restrictor. Since such contexts do not require the pragmatic function of highlighting a socially salient group identity, the simpler form (*biz*, *siz*) is preferred. In generic or collective-identity contexts, pluralized pronouns are licensed because they serve this function.

Given the above, we correctly predict that pluralized pronouns and PNCs can be used in episodic contexts if group identity is salient. In such cases, they may undergo Derived Kind Predication, which introduces local \exists quantification over instances of a kind (Carlson 1977; Chierchia 1998; cf. *dogs are barking outside*). For example, (7) can mean that some, but not all, earthquake victims received food aid. Furthermore, if negated, (7) yields a narrow-scope reading where no earthquake victim received aid (due to local \exists -closure), unlike regular indefinites.

(7) Ünlü bir iş adamı *biz-ler-el* *biz depremzede-ler-e* yiyecek
 famous one business man we-PL-DAT we earthquake.victim-PL-DAT food
 yardımına bulun-du.
 aid provide-PST
 ‘A famous businessman provided food aid to us earthquake victims.’

Concluding remarks. If our analysis is on the right track, one could rightly ask why pluralized plural pronouns are not possible in other languages: why is it that Turkish allows for *bizler*, but a pluralized pronoun version of *we*, **we*'s, is impossible in English? We propose that this follows from independent constraints on the realization of plural morphology in Turkish and English. In particular, the plural morpheme *-s* and its allomorphs can only suffix to nominals; for example, it cannot surface on adjectives within a noun phrase (e.g. *I bought these white shirts, and these *reds/red ones*). *-lar*, on the other hand, can surface as a suffix on a number of different lexical categories, including demonstratives (*bun-lar* 'this-PL') and adjectives (e.g. *kırmızı-lar* 'red-PL' and *genç-ler* 'young-PL,' as in (1a)). We hypothesize that whatever explains this distributional difference between English and Turkish plural morphemes in turn explains the difference between English and Turkish with respect to the availability of pluralized plural pronouns.

(The number of extra lines due to glossing is 11.)

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